

The Center for Black Diaspora DePaul University

las.depaul.edu/diaspora



The reading room of the Center for Black Diaspora which also serves as a conference and meeting space that houses a variety of materials for reading and screenings on the interdisciplinary aspects of the Black Diaspora.

The Center for Black Diaspora (initially named the Center for African-American Research) at DePaul University (a private Catholic university in Chicago, Illinois founded in 1898 which enrolls around 16,150 undergraduate and about 7,600 graduate/law students, making it the 13th largest private university by enrollment in the U.S., and the largest private university in the state of Illinois) was established in 1993, and thus, promotes and supports the study of the Black diaspora in all its complexities as shaped by the historical, contemporary and global experiences of dislocation, migration, cultural and ethnic intersections. In its commitment to engagement with collaborative, interdisciplinary and comparative scholarship and the arts, the center provides a venue for scholars from diverse disciplines and fields to share their work and also critically examine issues as well as expressive and performative, cultural and creative works.

While the programs and activities that the center organizes and sponsors focus primarily on Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, it also addresses their encounters with each other as well as other regions of the world. The center is committed to connections between academic studies of the diaspora, broader communities and their lived experiences. Hence, the center seeks to establish reciprocal relationships with other academic units, centers and institutes, community organizations and their constituents through community outreach. To maximize accessibility, the center's programs are open to faculty, students and staff, as well as members of the broader community.

At the Center for Black Diaspora, the African Diaspora is defined as the movement of African people and their descendants to various parts of the world. Fueled by the Trans-Atlantic enslavement of African people, the dispersal saw the rise in numbers of people of African descent in the Americas among other places in the world, outside Africa which gave rise to complex cultural typologies and histories. Therefore, the African Diaspora locates and identifies the dispersion of African people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in Africa, now scattered and displaced in separated communities.

As a unit of the university, the center seeks to strengthen the university's commitment by: providing and nurturing an intellectual and supportive environment in the production and dissemination of historical and cultural knowledge about people of African descent; generating knowledge through support of conferences, seminars and colloquia; serving the university's external community with programming of interest and relevance to the diverse population of Chicago, and collaborating with other academic units, centers and programs in sustaining an intellectual culture which promotes greater understanding of people of African decent

Specifically, the center invites individuals and groups from the broader community to participate in intellectually stimulating programs designed to promote scholarship, research, creative and artistic expression of the Black diaspora with programming that involves guest speakers, the Annual Frederick Douglass and Frantz Fanon Lecture Series, colloquia and conferences, and book discussions, as well as film and video screenings that explore issues related to the culture and history of the Black diaspora, all free and open to the public.

For example, for the Fall Quarter (September-November 2015) the program theme was "Black Lives Matter Here and Now" wherein a host of events addressed issues regarding Black lives in the USA in terms of racial, social, cultural issues related to police, state and community violence. These issues were explored in terms of a historical context of racial inequality, oppression and violence, the generation of fear and hate, the role of the mass and social media, as well as resistance and protest movements today. Regarding contemporary flashpoints, the police violence against Black individuals and communities in places like Ferguson and Detroit, were points of departure in the persistent culture and practice of violence against Black women, men and youth.

For the Winter Quarter (January-March 2016) the theme will engage “The Struggle for Social Justice Continues...” via a continuation of the conversation began during the fall, focusing on film and media responses to resistance and social protests in the USA with film screenings and discussions focused on the construction, production, and circulation of images, national and international, about Black people and others in how these images engender the development of particular attitudes and beliefs about them, shaping behaviors.

And for the Spring Quarter (March-June 2016), the theme will be the “International Decade for People of African Descent: Committed to Upholding Human Dignity and Equality for the Victims [and survivors] of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Colonialism, in Particular People of African Descent in the African Diaspora” which echo the launching of the “International decade for People of African Descent” by the United Nations as a significant milestone and which reflects the significance of the centrality of the transatlantic enslavement, slavery, and colonialism, not only to the development of the modern world, but also to continued racism, discrimination, and violence against people of African descent. Taking a cue from the United Nations, the Center’s programming works to explore the fundamental contributions made by people of African descent to the social, cultural, artistic, scientific, intellectual and literary productions to the contemporary world. From being on the margins of history, people of African descent have and continue to be central in the making of the modern world. Topics will include historical, contemporary issues related to recognition and justice.